

WADER STUDY GROUP PROJECTS – A POLICY STATEMENT

Most members will be aware that the Wader Study Group name frequently appears attached to a variety of projects publicised in the *Bulletin*. However not all members may be aware of how and why WSG is involved in such projects. This note is to explain the purposes of WSG involvement, the role WSG plays in such projects, the obligations involved in using WSG name, and the procedures that should be followed by anyone wishing to involve WSG in a project of their devising.

WSG projects arise in one of two ways. Some are initiated by WSG, when it becomes apparent that there is a need for accurate information on waders. Recent examples are the Surveys of Breeding Waders in the Outer Hebrides (started when it became apparent that agricultural change could have a major impact on important breeding wader populations) and the project on the Effects of Severe Weather on Waders (started after WSG identified a lack of quantitative information on the impact of severe weather, especially in relation to the imposition of statutory wildfowling bans in Britain). A third example is the International Spring Migration Studies along the East Atlantic Flyway. In this case WSG, through its extensive contacts with wader workers throughout the world, realised that experienced wader study teams would be working simultaneously in several seldom-visited areas of great importance to waders. WSG therefore co-ordinated some of the work of these groups, in an unrivalled opportunity to identify details of the migration routes of many waders. This has led to the continued co-ordination of such studies in subsequent years.

The second way in which WSG projects arise is from the approach of a wader worker(s) who feels that the involvement of WSG would help a project in which they have an interest. Recent examples include the Movements of Waders in Western Europe, the Project on the Migration of Inland Waders, the Pan American Shorebird Program, and the International Black-winged Stilt Project. Some projects are run jointly with other organisations such as the British Trust for Ornithology, a recent example being the Winter Shorebird Count.

A common important element in all these projects in which WSG is involved, is the participation of many people, often over a wide geographical area. Such widespread observer networks are vital in projects that, for example, involve sightings of colour-marked birds, or the collection of comparable data throughout the range of a species. Such data collection is outside the scope of most single workers. WSG is in a unique position to provide organisers of such studies with the means of contacting many wader workers, and asking for their assistance. This is achieved largely through announcements and reports in the *Bulletin*. It is largely in providing such contact and co-ordination that WSG is involved in most projects to which its name is attached. WSG does not normally attach its name to a project that is the specific research study of an individual wader worker. Although of course WSG help in a co-operative part of such a study can be sought.

The attachment of the WSG name, signifying WSG approval with the aims of a project, may in

some cases help in gaining finance from elsewhere to fund projects. However, WSG is unable to provide directly grant-aid for projects, although some limited logistical support may be possible in some cases. Nor should anyone approaching WSG with a project necessarily expect the Group to organise the project for him/her, although WSG, through its members, aims to provide as much help and advice as it can in administering a project.

Projects in the New World are dealt with by the New World Steering Committee (for addresses see inside front cover). Anyone elsewhere wishing to have WSG support in a project should contact the WSG Co-ordinator (*Theunis Piersma, Korte Nieuwstraat 4, 9724 LC Groningen, The Netherlands*) in the first instance. He/she should explain the background to the proposed project, the methods of data collection, the ways in which WSG can help, and the WSG involvement sought. The Co-ordinator may reply at that stage with advice and assistance, or may send the proposal to the Executive Committee for their comments and approval. It is important that the Executive Committee examine all proposals, to ensure that they do not conflict with WSG policy, or other projects. The approval of the Executive Committee is needed for the use of WSG name. Such approval at an early stage in the planning of a project means that further development can proceed safely using WSG name.

An announcement of the project can then be published in *WSG Bulletin*, giving background, methods and assistance sought from WSG members.

Organisers of WSG projects should recognise that the use of WSG name incurs an obligation to keep WSG Executive Committee and members regularly informed of progress. Progress reports should be published in the *Bulletin* at least every year, and more frequently where appropriate. This is important both so that the Executive Committee can ensure that the project continues to operate within the aims and policies of WSG, and to keep participants (and other WSG members) informed about progress and results. Such feedback is vital in ensuring continued help from participants. The Executive Committee can withdraw approval of the use of WSG name on a project, should the project be found to contravene WSG aims and policies. Any publications outside *WSG Bulletin* should give appropriate acknowledgement of WSG involvement, and a reprint should be sent to the Co-ordinator for inclusion in the WSG publications listing appended to the Annual Officers' Reports in the *Bulletin*.

These guidelines are not intended to deter anyone from seeking WSG help in co-operative wader studies, and we are always keen to hear from anyone who has identified a gap in our knowledge of waders that they think might be filled with WSG help. WSG exists to generate just such formal and informal links between people interested in waders as are developed with co-operative projects. We hope that the provision of these explanations and guidelines will encourage members to contact us with proposals for future projects.

Nick Davidson, on behalf of the Executive Committee.